10: Linton E-5 (1920-1921)1939
OX6 Marquesas OX6

The Marquesans gave the appearance of being friendly and open with whites, but were actually very much on guard. It was impossible to tell what was going on in their minds. They manifested their pleasures openly but seldom gave way to grief, although they flew into occasional fits of rage. They regarded death with the utmost composure. An old woman who lived immediately behind my house died of tuberculosis during my stay in her village. When it became apparent that she was not going to live much longer, her husband and four sons built a magnificent tomb for her. They reported each day on how it was coming along, and she was very proud and interested in the work. As she became worse, they started her coffin, building it on the front porch of the house so that she could watch the construction.

The strongest expression of emotion I ever saw was that of an eighteen-year-old boy to whom I gave a mouth organ. He had never seen one before and listened fascinated while I tooted on it. When I handed it over to him, he blew one note, then leaped into the air about four feet with a loud whoop. He did not thank me—that came later—but started off at a run, playing the instrument for all he was worth.

The average Marquesan had a horror of being laughed at, an aversion which was a powerful factor in maintaining the mores of the society, for the nonconformist was certain to be subjected to ridicule. Since the Marquesans are essentially a polite people, the handling was gentle from our point of view. They seldom ridiculed a man to his face, but he was nevertheless aware of the joking and talking that went on behind his back. If he was present at the informal assemblies of the tribe, there would be slighting allusions made to him and his foibles, the humor of which would be highly appreciated by the rest of the group. It was easier for the native to conform to the standards of the community than to be exposed to this sort of thing. This fear of ridicule was undoubtedly an important factor in the prevalence of suicide because of jilted love, which was previously discussed.

/26 cont./
rationale. Certain deviate individuals have refused to undergo circumcision, possibly /27/ as a concession to campaigns carried on by some French missionaries to stamp out the practice. One entire family in Taiohae has traditionally refused to be circumcised. Many males of this family have ultimately yielded to intense social pressure from their male friends, and also from their wives, being circumcised finally in their late twenties. Much of this pressure is exerted in the form of constant oblique joking about circumcision and people who are unclean. In the case of the wives, however, more direct pressure can be exerted. Their requests are usually in the form: "Why aren't you like other men?"

Circumcision in the Marquesas involves a very loose approximation to the true meaning of the term, for the operation involves a longitudinal incision through the foreskin on the dorsal aspect of the glans penis (po'ama).

A group of boys are gathered together and circumcised at one time by an individual who specializes in this operation. It is often attempted to have a relative of the parents generation perform the operation. No attempt is made to anesthetize the locale of the incision. The foreskin is stretched tightly over a slip of bamboo which has been inserted between it and the glans, while the incision is made with a razor blade or knife. Recently, scissors have come into vogue in Taiohae, as it is said that they make a much cleaner incision. In the aboriginal past, incisions were made with bamboo knives.

/28/ After circumcision, a medicinal preparation is applied to speed healing of the incision and prevent infection. This consists of the astringent juice of the candle-nut tree bark ('ama = A. trilobita) and the leaves of the kaka'a hue (Diellia Brownii). (Two other plants are also used but we could not identify them.) This is applied daily after bathing, at which time the area around the wound is carefully cleaned; then the penis is placed with the dorsal side against a sun-heated stream boulder until it is dried. The heat from the stream boulder is believed to have a beneficial effect on the healing process.

/35 cont./ 836
for the evening. In addition to such special data, young males 883
possess an incredible fund of precise knowledge concerning the interior lay-out of every house of interest in the valley and the idiosyncracies of husbands, parents, siblings and children of the females in question. Even the household animals have been thoroughly observed. In observing two of these expeditions, I received a demonstration of the value of this type of knowledge. In one house, the parents of the girl slept on the veranda [342] to scare away prowlers. They were known to copulate at approximately the same time each night. The male who wished to enter the house waited until the sounds of copulation died away, then approached the house. A dog belonging to the family [231] barked. It was necessary to stand still at that point for the dog to approach and examine the visitor, after which the dog would cease barking. A whisper through the side of the house then informed the girl of the presence of the suitor. Had she wished to receive him he would have mounted the veranda, passed the sleeping parents and entered /36/ the house. In the particular instance observed, however, the girl did not admit her lover. He forthwith unlocked the cookhouse door, removed a rickety chair, placed it beneath her window, climbed on it throwing a flower through the window onto her stomach; afterwards replacing the chair in the cookhouse.

Adolescent girls do not go out in groups at night, but remain in their homes except when errands are required or attendance at church is necessary. The males must come to them at night.

Older adolescent girls sometimes leave home and live 883
in groups, analogous to those of the boys, generally residing 591
in a vacant house owned by the family of one of their number, or using the house of a permissive and often closely related young married pair as a base of operations. There is a decided social stigma attached to such behavior, however, [626] ●
and such girls are known as vehine mako -- rutting women.

They seldom are able to find a permanent mate despite 883
the large numbers of transitory arrangements into which they 589
enter. They often live on marginal subsistence rations, if

/57 cont./

on Nuku Hiva, only two were known, while an additional reported incident ultimately proved to be an attempt at slander. Of the two occurrences, one involved a brother-sister relationship. The girl in this case was particularly promiscuous by native standards, being frequently compared to a pig or dog in her mating habits. Her brother, also possessed of a poor reputation, was married to a syphilitic tubercular, with whom he did not wish to consort, preferring the company of the promiscuous girls and often his sister.

The other case involved a mother-son relationship. This occurred in public during an orgy of drinking, at a time when the mother was unconscious and the son completely disoriented.

The sentiment against incest within the nuclear family is quite strong, with the imputation of incest being enough to seriously damage an individual's reputation. A middle-aged man had a single child, a daughter, of whom he was quite fond. He carefully protected her from males, hoping to marry her well. In overprotecting his daughter he incurred the wrath of a number of suitors. One of these, who had been involved in trouble with the girl's family previously, spread the rumor that he (the suitor) had had intercourse with the girl and that she had not proved /58/ virginal. When asked who had deflowered her, according to the boy she implicated her father, saying that they had intercourse in the bush while supposedly cutting copra.

The effect of this rumor was such that the father rushed the girl into an early marriage with an undesirable boy to prove that he was not being overly possessive of his daughter for ulterior reasons.

The most frequent incest is that between first cousins. One of the reasons for the transgression of this tapu is the relatively small size of population units, in many of which it is often impossible to find an unrelated eligible female. In a valley such as Ho'oumi (1958), for example, only two nubile girls were present in a population of approximately 35.

/61 cont./

Marriage

After a youth of experimentation, Marquesans usually narrow their interest to one member of the opposite sex, settling down to an informal marital relationship, which is accorded community acceptance and recognition, without any more formalized ceremony than a request to the parents of the girl by the prospective husband. This relationship is called no ho -- "staying or remaining (with someone)." Often another introduced term is used -- matiri'ia -- "married," to which is added 'i te ha'e pure -- "in church," to differentiate those unions with the approval of the clergy.

Although this rather informal relationship is still most common, two factors have produced a recent increase in church marriages. First, an increased knowledge of rudimentary French law on the part of the natives has resulted in the use of French legal procedures to force marriage on recalcitrant suitors. Parents assume an attitude of righteous indignation when a daughter is caught en flagrante or is misled by promises of marriage, and make complaints to government authorities to assuage their wounded honor. Secondly, the church itself has placed great emphasis on a program with the goal of sanctifying all existing unions and all those to come.

Therefore, if a couple's relationship should become obvious to the public, or if parents should feel that a daughter has been cheated in any /62/ way, the chances are quite high that religious and civil pressures, as well as social pressure, will be exerted to make the union a formal one.

As a result of church influence, a couple may be forced into formalizing a long-standing union, which otherwise would have functioned as well as any which did not obtain church blessing.

With or without formalization, separations are not infrequent, especially in the first years of a union. In the absence of legal marriage, one or the other partner merely departs. If there are children, they are divided among parents, in-laws, and friends, depending on the circumstances. The

/93 cont./
observances (Handy, ibid) reported in the ethnographic sources are no longer observed, not even in part. Elder informants, speaking of the past, stated that boys were often assigned to women who would supervise the healing of the incision and indulge in a ritual intercourse upon the removal of the scabs. There is no ethnographic or historic data to substantiate or contradict these statements; however, due to the fact that they were obtained from a usually reliable informant, I deem them to be acceptable, at least tentatively.

Likewise, no comparative data exists for the practice of preserving the bamboo slivers used for stretching the foreskin in the circumcision operation as a charm against impotence, although Handy reports that the slivers were preserved without stating a reason for the preservation. It was only possible to obtain information on this practice in one valley; therefore, the behavior may actually be a local development. It is doubtful if very profound regional differences in such matters can exist in an island population of about 980 people in which a reasonable amount of traffic between valleys takes place.

There is little evidence concerning the age at which male children began to have heterosexual experiences in the aboriginal period. Linton (p. 168) states that both sexes began heterosexual intercourse before /94/ puberty. As will be noted later, this was apparently true for the females, but it may not have been so for males. The stigma attached to lack of circumcision is strong today, and as Handy indicates (p. 95), it was quite strong in the past if not stronger. It is therefore doubtful if boys would be able to enter into heterosexual intercourse before circumcision. It appears, then, that circumcision may have been the gateway to heterosexual relations in the past as it is now, and the disparate ages at which the sexes begin such activity may not be a result of culture contact, but a reflection of the situation.

The vaginal cosmetics used by adolescent girls again bear witness to the heavy emphasis placed on genital qualities in evaluating the sexual potential of a woman. The use of cosmetics can be considered as part of the complex of practices beginning in early infancy, designed to